



Coalición de Derechos Humanos
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U.S. Border Patrol Shooting Illustrates Problem with Internal Investigations

The Coalición de Derechos Humanos/Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras calls for a full investigation by an independent entity of the incident on Wednesday resulting in a U.S. Border Patrol agent killing a suspected undocumented migrant. The continued use of deadly force in this manner, which goes unchecked, must stop, and a full investigation into this and similar incidents be conducted.

An investigation is underway of an incident in which a U.S. Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man on Wednesday, June 4, 2003. The agent claims to have feared for his life because the individual was allegedly throwing rocks. This continued pattern of offering justifications for these incidents before a full investigation occurs only serves to illustrate the problems with investigations of these nature.

It has been reported that this is at least the sixth time that an undocumented migrant has been shot by U.S. Border Patrol agents in Arizona in rock-related incidents since 1996. Of those six other incidents, two resulted in clearing the agent(s) involved, and the other four result in an "undetermined" fate for the agent. Such incidents crystallize the failure of U.S. border policies, and the dramatic influx of poorly trained and supervised Border Patrol agents has only resulted in the loss of more life.

This most recent incident renews the issue of whether there should be an independent review board for these cases given the conflicts of interest that are inherent in investigations of partner law enforcement agencies. We find too often that when law enforcement is investigating brother law enforcement branches, objectivity is sacrificed. Now, with INS being under Homeland Security, there has been even less accountability.

The Coalición de Derechos Humanos/Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras has been monitoring abuses, particularly at the hands of Border Patrol agents, for the past 15 years. We, along with other human rights, religious, and community organizations, have continued to demand Border Patrol accountability. We have continued to bring attention to the repeated use of deadly force, and the complete lack of accountability of the responsible parties. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have issued reports on incidents involving agents. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission has twice issued findings that condemn the lack of accountability, and have offered recommendations that have never been followed.

The Coalición de Derechos Humanos/Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras call on all allies and people of conscience to demand full investigations of U.S. Border Patrol incidents by an independent, unaffiliated party.

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